Chapter I

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The birth of the five independent Central Asian Republics (CARs) of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in 1991 following Soviet dis-integration created a new chapter in international politics. As part of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the region was inaccessible to countries not close to the former Soviet Union. With Russia in the north, China in the east, Afghanistan in the south, Iran in south and southwest and Caspian Sea in the west, the region is geo-strategically significant. Rich natural resources are yet another reason attracting international attention to the region. Three of the five Republics (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are rich in oil and natural gas. All the five republics are abundant in different types of minerals and natural resources.

Several external players rushed in to fill in the vacuum created after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The geo-strategic and geo-economic importance of the region also drew U.S. attention to the region. Post 9/11 and the beginning of the US led 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in Afghanistan added new dimension to the strategic importance of the region. However, the bonhomie created between the CARs and the U.S. after 9/11 was disrupted in 2005 as a result of few developments in the region, forcing the U.S. to rethink its strategy towards Central Asia.

As an Introduction to the study, the chapter gives an overview of the United States’ overall policy towards Central Asia since 1991. An outline of the broader U.S. policy towards Central Asia would help to understand the dynamics of the Uzbekistan-United States relations in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. The chapter also identifies few major issues that shape U.S. relations with the CARs, which would also be discussed in depth while dealing with Uzbekistan-U.S. bilateral relations. Finally, the chapter outlines the rationale, objectives, hypothesis and the methodology of the study.
The United States like most other external players got directly involved in the region after 1991. However, developments in the region even during Soviet period concerned the U.S. For example, the U.S. was uncomfortable with Soviet Union’s nuclear testing and missile-launch sites in Central Asia and in retaliation, the US started building military facilities in Iran and Pakistan (Maynes 2003: 121). With Soviet exit, the U.S. got an opportunity to play a direct role in the region. Nuclear proliferations, rise of extremism, authoritarian rule, weak states, poverty and poor economic development are some of the challenges these republics are facing since independence.

The Freedom Support Act of 1992 guided the U.S. policy towards the region in the years following independence (Office of the Press Secretary 1992). The Act of 1992 outlined the general U.S. policy guidelines towards the countries, which were part of the former Soviet Union. The 1992 Freedom Support Act “provides a flexible
framework to constructively influence the fast-changing and unpredictable events transforming Russia and Eurasia” (ibid). It emphasised on promoting democracy and open market in the former Soviet Union countries, which would facilitate American business interest in the region as reflected in the following words in the Act- (ibid)

“the collapse of the Soviet Union provides America with a once-in-a-century opportunity to help freedom take root and flourish in the lands of Russia and Eurasia. Their success in democracy and open markets will directly enhance our national security. The growth of freedom there will create business and investment opportunities for Americans and multiply the opportunities for friendship between our peoples”.

The basic provisions of the Act reflect the primary U.S. interests in the former Soviet republics, which includes the CARs too. Safety of nuclear weapons, non-proliferation, provision for humanitarian aid, promotion of democracy and free markets are some of the cardinal features of the Act. Below are few of the basic tenants of the Act- (ibid)

- Increase the authorities for humanitarian aid to cater to the basic human needs. The United States along with other donor countries would continue to provide food and medical assistance to reduce humanitarian crisis;
- Promote nuclear safety and demilitarization to prevent nuclear accidents and the spread of nuclear weapons;
- Assist in creating opportunities to build free markets;
- Increase support for democratic institutions;
- Improve access to credits for purchases of U.S. food;
- Facilitate greater trade and investment by removing Cold War restrictions;
- Support development of the private sector.

A full fledged U.S. strategy focussing on the region was formulated only under the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999. The Act of 1999 was earmarked for countries of Central Asia and Caucasus region. The name of the Act itself signifies the economic potential of the region. The region as part of the ancient Silk Road had served as a conduit connecting Europe with Asia and had facilitated trade between Asia and Europe. At present also, the region with its rich oil, gas and mineral resources has great economic significance. Stability in the region becomes imperative for vibrant economic activities to flourish. The Act says,

“The development of strong political, economic and security ties among countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia and the West will foster stability in the region, which is vulnerable to political and economic pressures from south, north and east. The development of open market economies and open democratic systems of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia will provide for positive incentives for international private investment,
increased trade and other forms of commercial interactions with the rest of the world”.

The Act also stipulated the grounds for ineligibility to receive U.S. assistance. Section 499E among other criteria mentioned violation of human rights, support for international terrorism and transfer of technology capable of building WMD as reasons for denying assistance.

The U.S. policy towards Caucasus and Central Asia as identified in the Act are- (ibid)

- "to promote and strengthen independence, sovereignty, democratic government, and respect for human rights;
- to promote tolerance, pluralism and understanding and counter racism and anti-Semitism;
- to assist actively in the resolution of regional conflicts and to facilitate the removal of impediments to cross-border commerce;
- to promote friendly relations and economic cooperation;
- to help promote market-oriented principles and practices;
- to assist in the development of the infrastructure necessary for communication, transportation, education, health and energy and trade on an East-West axis in order to build strong international relations and commerce between those countries and the stable, democratic and market-oriented countries of the Euro-Atlantic Community; and
- to support United States business interests and investment in the region.”

The main U.S. strategic objectives in the entire Eurasian region after 1991 were- (Fouskas 2003: 118)

- "The military bracketing of Russia and China in order to obtain their subordinate co-operation;
- The continuation of the strategic partnership with key EU states, while preventing the emergence of a federal Europe (the ‘fortress Europe’ project);
- The prevention of the formation of an alternative powerful coalition in Eurasia that would be capable of challenging the supremacy of the U.S.”.

The U.S. faces various challenges from different quarters in the region. Cohen (1997: 1) explains the U.S. overall interests in the region and its challenges-

“The United States has an overarching interest in encouraging the economic prosperity of the southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Economic growth would secure the sovereignty of the New Independent States (NIS); it would be effective in countering the radical Iranian influence; and it would provide lucrative markets for U.S. goods and services. Without broad-based economic development, the NIS will remain susceptible to political instability. A large number of policymaking elites in the NIS look to the United States not only for examples of economic success, but also for leadership-despite ideological and political competition from Asia and Iran”.

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From time to time, speeches by government officials also reflect the U.S. strategy towards the region. The former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott’s speech titled “A Farewell to Flashman: American Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia” in 1997 is an important document highlighting the U.S. policy towards the region. The primary objectives of the U.S. in the region as pointed out by Talbott are- promotion of democracy, creation of free market economies, sponsorship of peace and cooperation within and among the countries of the region and their integration with the larger international community (Talbott 1997: 2). Reform and stability in the region is vital for economic growth of the region and foreign investments are essential to stimulate economic development in these republics. Talbott (ibid: 1) in his speech pointed out the strategic and economic importance of the region and the need for reforms as-

“If reform in the nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia continues and ultimately succeeds, it will encourage similar progress in the other New Independent States of the former Soviet Union, including in Russia and Ukraine. It will contribute to stability in a strategically vital region that border China, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan and that has growing economic and social ties with Pakistan and India. The consolidation of free societies at peace with themselves and with each other, stretching from Black Sea to the Pamir Mountains, will open up a valuable trade and transport corridor along the old Silk Road between Europe with Asia. If economic and political reform in the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia does not succeed---if internal and cross-border conflicts simmer and flare---the region could become a breeding ground of terrorism, a hot bed of religious and political extremism, and a battleground for outright war”.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, former Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs describes the Eurasian region as a “chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played” (Brzezinski 1997a: 31). The geo-strategic location of the region attracts international attention to the region, accentuating the competition among various players to carve out their sphere of influences in the region. In order to preserve the U.S. interests in this strategic region, the U.S. needs to establish contacts with geo-strategically important countries of the Eurasian region and formulate a comprehensive geo-strategy for the region (ibid: 39-40). In words of Brzezinski (ibid) the U.S. policy should-

- “identify the geo-strategically dynamic Eurasian states that have the power to cause a potentially important shift in the international distribution of power and to decipher the central external goals of their respective political elites the likely consequences of their seeking to attain them, and to pinpoint the geo-politically critical Eurasian states whose location and/or existence have
catalytic effects either on the more active geo-strategic players or on regional condition.

- to formulate specific US policies to offset, co-opt, and/or control the above, so as to preserve and promote vital US interests and to conceptualize a more comprehensive geo-strategy that establishes on a global scale the interconnection between the more specific US policies”.

William J. Burns, Under Secretary of Political Affairs in his remark at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2009 pointed at the vital role the region played as part of the ancient Silk Route connecting East and West, North and South (Burns 2009: 1). The region in the present time also holds importance. Today, cooperation of the CARs are essential to tackle global challenges like drug trafficking, maintaining stability in Afghanistan etc. In addition, the rich hydrocarbon reserves make the region lucrative for global energy security.

“Central Asia’s economic growth and political development can produce more reliable partners for combating global challenges, from non-proliferation to counter-narcotics to energy security. A stable future for Afghanistan depends on the continued assistance to our Central Asian partners-just, as a stable future for Central Asia depends upon success against violent extremists in Afghanistan. The energy resources of Central Asia can be a force for predictability in the global economy, ensuring diversity of sources and markets and transit routes, while at the same time bringing a new sense of economic possibility in the region itself” (ibid).

Post September 11, 2001, the region assumed greater strategic significance, which brought about a paradigm shift in the U.S. policy towards the region. The region became a front-runner in the U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan. Three of the five CARs (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) share border with Afghanistan. Charles William Maynes¹ (2003: 132) argues, “Central Asia is the place for the United States to develop a set of policies appropriate to the new challenges of the post-September 11 world.” Though the U.S. is engaged with these republics since 1991, it is post 9/11 US led operation in Afghanistan that bought CARs much closer to the U.S. Instability in the region and spread of extremist forces would have a destabilizing impact on the region, a development also threatening international security scenario. Maynes pointed out- (ibid: 121)

“September 11, which abruptly brought the United States and Central Asia together much more closely and permanently. One of the world’s richest countries, a state so powerful that its military and economic reach seems

¹ Charles William Maynes was the President of the Eurasian Foundation (1997-2006) and the Editor of Foreign Policy Magazine (1980 to 1997).
limitless, suddenly began to voice greater concern over developments in one of the world’s most remote and powerless regions. Of course, Washington’s heightened interest is understandable. If Central Asian countries take the wrong path, it is feared, they may willingly or unwittingly provide sanctuary to the kinds of terrorists that struck the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre”.

Anti-terrorism became the focus of the US foreign policy after 9/11. With the onset of ‘war on terrorism’, the CARs because of their proximity to Afghanistan became crucial actors in the U.S. led operation in Afghanistan. President Bush in the aftermath of the attack stated that the United States response depended on the “critical support” of countries such as Pakistan and Uzbekistan (Wishnick 2002: 12).

Highlighting the U.S. policy orientation after September 11, former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs A. Elizabeth Jones said, “the quality of US foreign relations in future will be measured by new standards: either a country is with US or is with the terrorist” (Jones 2001). She also pointed out that the CARs would play a “critical role” in the campaign against terrorism (ibid).

With the onset of ‘war on terror’ in 2001, the U.S. established military bases at Karshi Khanabad (K2) in Uzbekistan and Manas at Kyrgyzstan. In 2005, the U.S. base in Uzbekistan was closed. The U.S. military presence in the region has been further complicating the geo-political scenario of the region and has evoked lots of criticism too. There are scholars arguing that there is little strategic importance of the U.S. military presence in the region. Although the U.S. has “real and significant interests” in Central Asia and must “maintain relationships” with these republics, the “military role of this effort, while critical, is comparatively small” (Oliker and Shlapak 2005: 2). For peace and stability in the region, economic and political development of the region is of utmost importance, argued Oliker and Shlapak. The U.S. military presence in the region started with the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and should end with the completion of the operation (ibid). Nevertheless, the U.S. security policy towards Central Asia would continue to be a “critical component of the U.S. national security strategy, for a number of reasons beyond Operation Enduring Freedom itself” (ibid).

Great power rivalry complicates the geo-politics of the region. Brzezinski (1997a) pointed out that the region is the hotspot where “struggle for global primacy still continues”. For the sake of stability in the region, the three main powers the U.S.,
Russia and China need to work in tandem. They need to come to an understanding on the “kind of military presence the United States will maintain in the region” and find out means to “work with the Russian and Chinese militaries to address some of the other local security threats” (Maynes 2003: 129).

Cornell2 (2002: 336) argues that the “U.S. has the potential to play an important stabilizing role in the region, but as long as uncertainty surrounds its commitment, America’s role may instead be destabilizing if other powers try to test its determination to remain engaged”. Cooperation among the regional players like Russia, China, Pakistan, India, Iran and Turkey is essential for peace and development of the region (ibid).

The continuing U.S. presence has nevertheless raised doubts about the U.S. intention in the region. The 2005 Astana summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) reflected the growing uneasiness of the prolonged U.S. presence in the region. Since the U.S. mission in Afghanistan was over, the Astana Summit of the SCO asked the coalition forces to give a definite timeline to end its military presence in Central Asia. Some scholars view that the Astana Declaration encouraged President Karimov’s decision to close the U.S. base at K2.

The U.S. after September 11 could no longer treat the region as secondary in its foreign policy objectives. Lorne Craner, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, in June 2004, best sums up the U.S. strategy for the region in the following words-

“The primary strategic goal of the United States in Central Asia is to see the development of independent, democratic, and stable states, committed to the kind of political and economic reform that is essential to modern societies and on the path to integration and to the world economy. The strategy that we follow is based on simultaneous pursuit of three related goals. The first of these goals is security. Our counterterrorism cooperation bolsters the sovereignty and independence of these states and provides them with the stability needed to undertake the reforms that are in their long-term interest. However, in order for these nations to be truly stable over the long-term and to be fully integrated into the international community, to achieve their potential, they must allow for greater transparency, respect for human rights, and movement toward democratic policy. Finally, the development of Central Asia’s economic potential, including its extensive natural resources, requires

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2 Svante E. Cornell is the Research Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, and a co-founder of the Institute for Security and Development Policy, Stockholm.
free market economy reforms and foreign direct investment. This is the only way to improve the well-being of the region’s people, diversify world energy sources and facilitate the movement of these counties into the world economy’ (Blank 2007: 2).

The U.S. policy formulation for the region needs to take into account the social, political and economic developments in the region, which is far from satisfactory. Dubious elections, authoritarian rule, human rights violations, corruption, lack of economic development, poverty, severe media censorship etc are common characteristics present in all the five CARs. John Negroponte (2006), former Director of U.S. National Intelligence in his Congressional address pointed out the grim situation prevailing in the Central Asian Countries, which need to be addressed.

“Central Asia remains plagued by political stagnation and repression, rampant corruption, widespread poverty, and widening socio-economic inequalities, and other problems that nurture radical sentiment and terrorism. In the worst, but not implausible case, central authority in one or more of these states could evaporate as rival clans or regions vie for power-opening the door to an expansion of terrorist and criminal activity on the model of failed states like Somalia and, when it was under Taliban rule, Afghanistan”.

Security, energy, political and economic reforms remain the guiding principles of the U.S. policy towards the region. Echoing similar sentiments, Richard Boucher (2006: 1), the former Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs in his statement to the House of International Relations Committee stated-

“Our strategy rests on three integrated pillars: security cooperation; our commercial and energy interests; and political and economic reform. We see these three pillars as mutually reinforcing. Genuine stability, in our view, requires a process of democratic change, and stability, in turn, provides for economic development and prosperity. Thus, we are determined to pursue all three sets of interests simultaneously in a balanced way. The people of these countries strategically and individually, deserve choice and opportunities so that they may exercise their independence-not by relying on one market or power, but by having a variety of options. Our policy is to help them have options”.

The year 2005 has been another turning point in the U.S relation with the CARs. Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (March 2005), Andijan incident in Uzbekistan (May 2005), and the subsequent closure of the K2 base in Uzbekistan deteriorated the U.S. position in the region. Against the backdrop of the dwindling U.S. influence in the region, the former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s visit to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in October 2005 was a step to revive the U.S. position in the region. Allaying fears among the CARs of the U.S. military presence in the
region, Rice during her visit categorically stated that the U.S. has no intention of permanent military bases in Central Asia (Rice 2005). The visit also highlighted the role Afghanistan could play connecting Central Asia and South Asia and thereby proposing the potential of economic cooperation between the two regions. In order to facilitate such a corridor between Central Asia and South Asia, stability in Afghanistan is of foremost importance. The visit thus marked a beginning of a new thinking in the U.S. policy towards Central Asia i.e. linking Central Asia with South Asia through Afghanistan or Greater Central Asian region. Condoleezza Rice in her speech at Eurasian University in Kazakhstan during her October 2005 visit to the region projected the new U.S. thinking about Greater Central Asia- “a secure and prosperous Afghanistan, which anchors Central Asia and links it to South Asia, is essential to the future of economic success” (ibid).

The timing of Rice’s visit to the region was symbolic as it was the time when the U.S. relation with Uzbekistan was at its lowest ebb. She visited Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and skipped Uzbekistan from her itinerary, which indicated the U.S. search for new friends in Central Asia. Her speech at the Eurasian University also reflected the U.S. interest in strengthening U.S. relation with Kazakhstan, which is economically more developed compared to the other four CARs. Highlighting the importance of Kazakhstan, Rice said, Kazakhstan is a “great corridor of reform linking the provinces of northern Russia to the ports of South Asia, the republics of Western Europe to the democracies of East Asia” (ibid).

Condoleezza Rice during her October visit to Central Asia officially spelled out the Greater Central Asia concept. However, at the academic level, the Greater Central Asia concept was put forward by S Frederick Starr in his March 2005 Silk Road Paper on “A’ Greater Central Asia Partnership’ for Afghanistan and its neighbours”. He later further explained the concept in his article “A Partnership for Central Asia” published in Foreign Affairs. He argued that the Greater Central Asia Partnership for Cooperation and Development (GCAP) would be a regional platform for planning, coordination and implementation of various U.S. programmes (Starr 2005: 165). He says,

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3 S. Frederick Starr is Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program. He is a Research Professor at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.
“The GCAP would signal the United States' recognition of its long-term interests in Central Asia. It would also reflect the fact that peace and development are best advanced by recognizing greater Central Asia as a single region linked by common interests and common needs. The emergence of this zone would have important benefits for both the region itself and the United States, rolling back the forces of extremism and serving as an attractive model for developing Muslim societies elsewhere” (ibid).

Starr (ibid: 168) further highlighted the reasons for the U.S. to support the Greater Central Asia concept-

“It must advance the war on terrorism, building U.S.-linked security infrastructure. It must enable Afghanistan and its neighbors to protect themselves against radical Islamists and drug traffickers. It must work to strengthen the region’s economies and relevant government institutions to the point where the region can serve as an economic and political bridge between the Middle East and southern and eastern Asia. It must work to develop vigorous regional trade and adequate transport. It must foster participatory political systems that can serve as models for other countries with large Muslim populations. All these ends are best advanced on a regional basis”.

Back in 2003, scholars also pointed out the need for increasing cooperation between CARs and the neighbouring countries in the south. Central Asia should include countries like Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, which would help to resolve issues border disputes, water problems and provide for a bigger market, argued Maynes (2003: 131). Starr (2008: 13) later in another Silk Road Paper defended the Greater Central Asia as a region, which shares, “centuries of intense economic and social interaction based on functional specialization and easy transport – is more directly relevant to economic and social development today than are the elements that divide the regional parts from one another”.

The concept is not without its pitfalls. Afghanistan is the crucial player in the GCPA and the success of the project hence depends on stability in Afghanistan, which at this stage is laden with various difficulties. Deteriorating Afghan security scenario and resurgence of Taliban forces makes the transit corridor through Afghanistan vulnerable to terrorist attacks, which is the greatest challenge facing the project. Moreover, spat between India and Pakistan further complicates the project. Critics have pointed out that the project is intended to keep the CARs away from developing stronger relations with Russia and China, thereby reducing their influence in the region. Both these regional players who share border with the CARs have strengthened their position in the region with the creation of Shanghai Cooperation
Organization (SCO). It is a Russia and China led regional group to keep the U.S. away from the region and has refused to include the U.S. in its fold. The growing prominence of the SCO in the region has reduced West’s power to influence the political developments in the region (Tian 2009: 12). Through the Greater Central Asia project, the U.S. on the other hand is using energy, transportation and infrastructure as “bait to attract Central Asian countries from the post Soviet Union dominance” (ibid). The project would “destroy the integrity of the entire Central Asian region and break the balance of the roles of big powers on Central Asian countries, hence leading to the emergence of polarization and confrontation within the Central Asian Region” (ibid: 13).

To encourage integration of Central Asia and Afghanistan, which is the backbone of the Greater Central Asia concept, the U.S. trade and Development Agency started the Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative in 2005. In the same year, $1 million was earmarked for Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan. The Initiative was to target “activities in the areas of energy, transportation and communication that promotes cooperation among the countries in the region and their integration into the global economy” (USTDA 2005). The conference on “Electricity Beyond Borders” held at Istanbul in 2006 was yet another step reflecting the U.S. interest in pursuing the Greater Central Asia project.

Few changes in the administration were undertaken at this time testifying the U.S. interest for a “Greater Central Asia” region. The Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs was created in February 2006. Earlier the Bureau of South Asia looked after South Asian affairs and Central Asia came under Bureau of Europe and Eurasian Affairs.

Another policy initiative taken by the U.S. to define its strategy towards the region was the Silk Road Strategy Act of 2006, which like the 1999 Act reinforces the U.S. primary interests in the region as security, energy, political and economic reforms. The situation in the region since 1999 has changed making it imperative for the U.S. to modify its policy to cater to the demands of the changing time. The 2006 Act says, since post 9/11 “the need for mutually beneficial security cooperation between the United States and the countries of Central Asia and South Caucasus has grown, while the United States has come to view democratization of the countries in
the region as essential to enhanced security”. The strategic importance of the region is increasing. Democracy is still a distant dream in the region and would be a long-term process. The ‘colour revolution’ in Kyrgyzstan also failed to produce meaningful democratic institution in Kyrgyzstan. Punitive measures like “threat” to deny or cancel assistance have failed to promote democratic reforms in these republics (Olcott 2006: 1).

“Even a decision to ‘throw money’ at the region’s problems would not turn most of these countries into viable democracies with market-based economies any time soon. Some of these states have little need for outside economic assistance, and their leaders perceive even less need for outside advice, while others will eschew assistance rather than accept what they see as unwanted ‘foreign meddling’”.

Developments in the region suggest that the U.S. can no longer use such rhetoric like democratic reforms and human rights as criteria to provide assistance to these republics. It is not that the U.S. has been uniformly practising these principles in its relations with the CARs. The U.S. after 2001 relegated the importance of these two principles while providing assistance to Uzbekistan, a country which performs poorly in both these issues. Russia and China have shown no qualms about poor human rights records and democratic reforms while engaging with these republics that helped them to reassert their influence in the region. Repeated use of such rhetoric like democratic reforms and human rights is giving Russia and China an upper hand in the region. Olcott4 (ibid), suggested that the U.S. should “continue to provide foreign assistance to all the governments of the region (regardless of their human rights records) for programs that the U.S. believes important for the development of civil societies and transparent economies in the region”. She says, the U.S. should not support the ‘mechanisms of repression’, but it should support projects that address (ibid)

- “Legal transparency in the economy, including laws protecting property and the mechanisms of executing and securing foreign investment;
- Legal training, including legal education, and the training and retraining of judges, according to curricula that meet western standards;
- English language training, with particular attention to rural areas;
- Science and technology training in primary and secondary schools, with attention to rural areas;
- Enhancing scholarship opportunities so that students from Central Asia can pursue higher education in the U.S.;

4 Martha Brill Olcott, Martha Brill Olcott is a senior associate with the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, D.C.
• Increased attention to employment opportunities after degree completion, through local government supported employment “agencies” in country, and enhanced opportunities for employment in the U.S. for those from closed societies in the region”.

Afghanistan featured very prominently in the 2006 Act dealing with Central Asia and Caucasus. The fate of Afghanistan and CARs are sealed because of their geographic proximity. CARs bear the brunt of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. Emphasising the connection between CARs and Afghanistan, the Act says, “in recognition of global and regional threats to stability, prosperity and democracy in Afghanistan, including terrorism, political-religious extremism and production and trafficking of narcotics, and in recognition of Afghanistan’s geographic location and cultural and historical identity, Afghanistan should be considered to be among the countries of Central Asia, and not separate from them” (Silk Road Strategy Act 2006).

The Act also specifically identified Kazakhstan as an important partner for the U.S. in the region. This is significant as post 2005, the U.S. relation with Uzbekistan deteriorated, which was the strongest in the region after 2001. The U.S. post 2005, was trying to bridge the gap with other CARs and establish closer cooperation with them to preserve its interests in the region. The Act says,

“In recognition of security cooperation from the Government of Kazakhstan, including deployment of the Kazakhstan contingent in Iraq, progress toward a market economy, United States business participation in energy and infrastructure development in Kazakhstan and an ongoing Government of Kazakhstan policy of ethnic and religious tolerance, a relationship with Kazakhstan is of high importance to the United States”.

Moreover, Kazakhstan plays a pivotal role “in diversification of energy sources and transportation routes, enhancing and contributing to United States energy and security interests” (ibid). The Act also acknowledged the growing importance of the U.S. base at Manas in Kyrgyzstan. The base is a major transit hub for the U.S.-led coalition operation in Afghanistan, which has been in use since 2001. At present, the Manas base is the lone surviving U.S. base in the region after the K2 base was closed in 2005. Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the world to host both US and Russian military bases, adding to the geo-political importance of this republic.

As mentioned in the Act, the U.S. policy towards the region should help to promote democracy, tolerance and development of civil society; encourage
programmes to facilitate conflict resolution in the region; strengthen economic cooperation and international trade; promote economic reforms, infrastructure development and support region wide initiatives to train and coordinate border control, law enforcement and security forces to safeguard U.S. interest in the region. Some of the main highlights of the U.S. primary interest in the Central Asia and Caucasus as identified in the Act (2006) are-

- "The economic and political stability of the countries of the Central Asia and the South Caucasus has a direct impact on the United States interest.
- Stability, democratic development, protection of property rights, including mineral rights, and rule of law in countries with valuable energy resources and infrastructure, including Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, are important to safeguard United States energy security.
- Preventing any country from establishing a monopoly on energy resources or energy transport infrastructure in the countries of Central Asia and South Caucasus that may restrict United States access to energy resources is important to the energy security of the United States and other consumer of energy in the developed and developing world.
- Extensive trade relations with energy-producing and energy-transporting states of Central Asia and South Caucasus will enhance United States access to diversified energy resources, thereby strengthening United States energy security, as well as that of energy consumers in developed and developing countries.
- Stability in the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus is important to the security interests of the United States.
- In order for the United States to maintain bases for its troops in the proximity of the military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States should seek to maintain good relations with the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus.
- It is in the interest of the United States and the global war on terror of the United States to maintain friendly relations with Muslim states in Central Asia and the South Caucasus that promote democracy, open economies, and the rule of law in the region.
- It is in the interest of the United States to make any and all efforts to prevent the proliferation of materials for weapon of mass destruction and the trafficking in narcotics and persons, much of which can be attributed to the porous borders and insufficient security between the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus."

With each passing year, the importance of the region for the U.S. is increasing, especially because of the crisis in Afghanistan. Security dimension of the U.S. policy towards the region is gaining prominence among policy makers. With Barack Obama coming to power and committing to increase the size of coalition troops in Afghanistan, a change in the U.S. Afghan strategy was visible. The situation in Afghan-Pakistan border is deteriorating and the coalition supply route through
Pakistan has been constantly attacked, thereby raising alarm in the U.S. policy making circle. Olcott in her 2009 Congressional Testimony identified the Central Asian region as a “direct security concern” for the U.S. At present, the region is vital for the U.S. led coalition operation in Afghanistan. The supply route through Pakistan has been constantly attacked by Taliban forces, thereby threatening supply to the coalition forces stationed in Afghanistan. The U.S. has been supporting the Northern supply route through Central Asia to Afghanistan as an alternative to the Pakistan supply route, which requires cooperation of the CARs.

Though security concerns have taken pre-eminence in the U.S. policy towards the region, energy reserves and access to the region’s resources remain one of the vital components of the U.S. policy in the region. Olcott in her 2009 Testimony also highlighted the importance of direct access to the region’s energy resources bypassing Russia. The U.S. interest in promoting democratic values in these republics remains an important agenda even today. These countries “vary in the openness of their political systems as well as the market-based nature of their economies”, Olcott pointed out in her 2009 Testimony. The leaders in the region do not think that their countries are still ready for western style democracies and strongly believe that stability is best guaranteed by a “strong hand” (ibid). The CARs leaders’ attitude demonstrate that democratic reforms in these republics would be slow and too much pressure on democratic reforms would be seen in the region as West’s intention to impose western values in the society, which would meet with strong opposition from the region.

Another apprehension of the CARs is the consequence of the U.S. pulling out of Afghanistan. Porous border with Afghanistan make these republics vulnerable to any instability in Afghanistan. If the U.S. leaves Afghanistan, the CARs greatest challenge would be to tackle illegal arms, narcotics trade and refugee crisis. At the same time, the daunting challenge for the CARs would be to maintain cordial relation with whoever forms the government in Afghanistan, which is crucial for regional stability (ibid).

The U.S. would in no way give up its efforts to gain foothold in the region’s resources both for strategic and economic interests. The U.S. government have to take note of American business interests who have invested in these republics. Moreover,
Russia, China and Iran are gaining influence in the region’s resources, which would in the long-run a strategic loss for the U.S. in the region. Olcott (2009) suggested that the U.S. should increase military assistance to CARs, especially to enhance effective border control. Also, the U.S. should focus on its project of multiple pipelines in the region (ibid). As for democratic reforms in these republics, the U.S. needs to assess carefully the idiosyncrasies of each republic. Though the CARs share some common features, yet they are very different from each other.

“The U.S. policy makers must look more creatively at the challenge of democracy building in the region, and become more sensitive to the differences between countries and the generational change that is occurring at the societal level. Finally, the U.S. should redouble efforts to enhance the coordination of the IFIs and other bilateral assistance providers to work with the Central Asian states to help them relieve their short and medium term energy shortages, as well as addressing the long term challenges” (ibid).

The US policy in Central Asia in the initial years focused primarily on nuclear non-proliferation and gaining access to the vast natural resources of the region. The U.S. in order to preserve its position tried to keep other external players from gaining foothold in the region. Russia being the erstwhile power enjoyed both advantages and disadvantages and was a major challenge to the U.S. interest in the region. Russia because of its Soviet legacy has greater control and access to the region’s resources that worked against the U.S. capability to influence the CARs. However, the leaders of these republics in their quest to reduce their dependence on Russia have opened their doors to the other external players. Growing presence of China also is a challenge to the U.S. position in the region. Since September 11, the security factor gained preponderance over economic issues. Both geo-economic and strategic factors would nevertheless shape the U.S. relations with the CARs as evident in all policy documents and government official speeches. Scholars and experts working on the region have also identified both economic and security as prime U.S. interests in the region. Priority might shift according to the changing situation. Thus, rich natural resources, strategic location of the CARs, vast market, the important role these republics play in the US fight against terrorism explain the U.S. interest in the region. Stephen Blank (2007: 1) said, “Central Asia is an area whose importance to the United States is acknowledged to be growing”.

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MAJOR ISSUES

The support of the CARs was vital for the U.S. struggle against Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The region because of its location became a strategic asset for the U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan in addition to the already existing interests. The U.S. aid and assistance to the region, especially to Uzbekistan increased since 2001. Afghanistan crisis became a deciding factor in U.S. relations with the CARs and marked a radical change in U.S. approach to the region. However, it would be unfair to assume that other issues like democracy, Islamic extremism, nuclear non-proliferation, energy, great power competition is not playing a decisive role in shaping the U.S. policy towards the region.

Democratization, Human Rights and Extremism

Democracy emerged as the guiding principle of the foreign policy of the West after the end of cold war. ‘The Democratic Peace Theory’, which claims that compared with totalitarian countries, democratic countries has fewer tendencies to war, at least among democracies (Tian 2009: 13). Democracy, according to this doctrine, is regarded as a “powerful weapon to eliminate the roots of terrorism-social disorder, economic recession and governmental repression” (ibid). All policy documents that guided policy making towards the region like the Freedom Support Act 1992, The Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999 and 2006 have clearly identified promotion of democracy as a principle feature of the U.S. policy towards the region. However, criteria for the U.S. assistant in exchange of progress in democratic reforms have often been made secondary to other U.S. interest in the region. For example, the U.S.-Uzbekistan relation was at its best post 9/11 even though the republic had poor democratic and human rights records.

One important debate among the U.S. policymakers is the priority between democracy and security. The fight against terrorism has often forced the U.S. to keep aside its democratic principles in the region and cooperate closely with regimes with scant regards for democratic principles. According to Dr. Robert Guang Tian, three approaches spells out the U.S. policy towards Central Asia- “balanced boosting, democracy first and security first. There has been intense debate among policy makers and academicians whether to focus on democracy or security while formulating policy
towards the region. The U.S. government would nevertheless want to balance security, democracy and economics in its approach towards Central Asia (ibid: 5). A democratic state can “withstand” terrorist attacks and thus calls for promoting democratic reforms to ensure stability in these republics, argues the supporters of the principle of ‘democracy first’ (ibid: 6). On the other hand, the proponents of the “security first” principle argues that the U.S. in order to achieve its strategic goals and preserve its interest in the region need to cooperate with the Central Asian governments to fight terrorism (ibid: 6). However, Tian (2009: 7) argues that democracy in the region would not be a smooth transition and hence it would not be in U.S. interest to give priority to democracy over security.

The rise of Islamic radicalism in the region is inimical to the U.S. interest. The growth of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HUT) has caused alarm in the U.S. policy making circle. After repeated attacks by IMU in Uzbekistan since 1999, the U.S. blacklisted IMU as a terrorist outfit in 2000. Moreover, the resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan is feared by the U.S. as these disruptive forces might find sympathisers in CARs, which would lead to regional instability. The government of the CARs have repressed the radical forces with heavy hand that is often criticised for its violation of basic human rights principles. These governments have also often utilised the opportunity to crush political opponents in name of extremism. Nevertheless, curbing the spread of Islamic fanaticism in the region is very much in the U.S. policy thinking towards the region.

**Nuclear Non-Proliferation**

Central Asia during the Soviet period housed Soviet nuclear weapons. After independence, the nuclear materials remained with these republics. The Freedom Support Act of 1992 pointed out the need for “nuclear safety and demilitarization to prevent nuclear accidents and the spread of nuclear weapons”. It also expanded the scope of the $500 million appropriated for the U.S. Department of Defense in 1991 “to support defense conversion, non-proliferation efforts, nuclear weapons dismantlement, addressing the “brain drain” problem, the relocation of former Soviet military forces, and nuclear plant-safety”.

The CARs possess three types of materials related to Weapons of Mass
Destruction (WMD)- nuclear weapon-related material, including fissile material; (highly enriched uranium and plutonium) and radioactive material ("orphan", or abandoned, source); biological weapon related materials and technologies; and chemical weapon materials and technologies (Kassenova 2007: 13). Huge reserve of uranium is available in the region, which was used during the Soviet period to produce fissile materials like highly enriched uranium (HEU) and plutonium. The first atom bomb created by the Soviet Union used uranium from Vostokredmet mine in Tajikistan (Butler 2002).

The region was the site for many Soviet nuclear, biological, chemical, radiological weapons and missiles tests. For example, during Soviet days, the Vozrozhdeniye Island, lying between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the Aral Sea was the largest testing site for biological weapons (ibid). Testing of chemical weapons was conducted at Nukus in Uzbekistan. Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan was a well know testing site during the Soviet days, which tested 456 nuclear devices and radiological weapons (ibid).

Soviet WMD programme also included biological weapons fabrication facility at Stepnogorsk in Kazakhstan, which was the largest in the world (ibid). Kazakhstan possessed 1410 Soviet strategic missiles armed with nuclear warhead (ibid). Moreover, six nuclear research reactors are available in the region and a breeder reactor producing plutonium on the Caspian Sea (ibid).

The presence of WMD materials was a concern and a challenge for the republics as well as for the international community. Some scholars believe that "the geopolitical conditions in modern Central Asia together with the Soviet WMD legacy in the region create a dangerous combination of security risks and threats to Central Asia itself and the world" (Kassenova 2007: 21). One of the major threats was the WMD materials falling into the hands of the terrorists outfits and in turn might be used for building WMD. Proper safeguard of these materials was a mammoth task for these Republics. The danger became more challenging after 2001 with the constant threat that Al Qaeda might smuggle out these materials from the region for their ulterior motives. Another threat in the region was that terrorists’ outfits using the region to transit nuclear materials collected from outside to be used against adversaries (Butler 2002). Lack of effective border control was yet another factor
encouraging easy movement of WMD materials from the region (ibid).

The CARs since independence showed keen interest to participate in non-proliferation and actively engaged in destroying their WMD materials. The republics with assistance from the international community have successfully addressed the problem. The five CARs are signatories to major international non-proliferation treaties. They have taken sincere measures to dismantle their WMD materials and to prevent these materials from falling to wrong hands.

A significant initiative reflecting the CARs willingness to discard their WMD materials was the signing of the Central Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (CANWFZ) treaty on 21 March 2009. The treaty came into force after years of deliberations, which started back in September 2002 when the five CARs agreed on the text of the treaty for a CANWEFZ. The Treaty prevents development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition or possession of any nuclear explosive device within the zone (IAEA.org 2009: 1). However, the treaty allows the countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under IAEA safeguards. Appreciating the CARs efforts in establishing the CANWFZ, the IAEA announced,

"the zone is an additional contribution to our efforts for a world free from nuclear weapons and is an important regional confidence-building and security measure. The Director General notes with appreciation that the Treaty creating the zone requires the Treaty States to have both a Safeguards Agreement and an Additional Protocol. The combination of these two legal instruments would enable the Agency to not only provide assurances about declared nuclear activities but equally, also, assurances nuclear activities in the zone" (IAEA 2009: 1).

Even before this treaty came into force, the individual republics took various steps to destroy WMD materials present in their countries. The U.S. efforts in assisting the CARs to destroy their WMD materials are noteworthy. Nuclear non-proliferation was one of the most important U.S. agenda in the region especially in the years following independence. Since 1991, the U.S. have assisted the CARs through various programmes to make the region nuclear free. The Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programme was a milestone in this effort. Listed below are some of the major achievements under the CTR programme- (Butler 2002)

- In 1992, Kazakhstan ratified the START-I and became an NPT member in 1994. By April 1995, it transferred its nuclear warheads to Russia. It also destroyed the missile silos, bombers and launch facilities in its territory and
also returned the left over bombers to Russia.

- In August 1991, Kazakhstan closed the Semipalatinsk Test. In the period during 1997-2000, infrastructure used for testing including bore holes and tunnels were destroyed.
- 581 kilograms (1,278 pounds) of HEU fuel was shifted from the Ulba Metallurgy Plant in northeast Kazakhstan to the United States.
- In 2002, the United States engaged private companies in a partnership to separate low-enriched uranium from uranium concentrate at Ulba Metallurgy Plant. The resulting material could be used as fuel in nuclear power reactors. The project also opened up opportunities for new jobs.
- Anthrax production facility in Stepnogorsk in Kazakhstan was destroyed. The CTR programme also facilitated physical protection and accounting systems at biological research facilities in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.
- The U.S. allocated $6 million to de-contaminate areas of Vozrozhdeniye Island, where biological agents are buried, and to dismantle testing infrastructure.
- Two nuclear research reactors have been dismantled entirely, including one in Tashkent and one at the Semipalatinsk. The Semipalatinsk reactor was shipped back to Russia.
- Physical protection and material accounting systems have been upgraded at nuclear research reactors in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The 90 percent HEU fuel at a research reactor in Uzbekistan was reduced to 36 percent in 1997. Under a March 2002 agreement between Russia, the U.S. and Uzbekistan spent HEU fuel at the site will be shipped back to Russia.
- A chemical weapons production and testing facility near Nukus in western Uzbekistan has been dismantled with $8.5 million from CTR funds.
- A breeder reactor in western Kazakhstan designed to produce plutonium was closed in 1999. The spent fuel containing three metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium was repackaged (a process that decreased the material’s vulnerability to theft and diversion).

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is also engaged in assisting the CARs in their non-proliferation efforts. It helps Kazakhstan with long-term storage facilities. The DOE in its budget request for the financial year 2008 asked for US$ 31.7 million to help Kazakhstan with the storage facilities (Kassenova 2007: 16). Kazakhstan by 2010 aims to shift the entire BN-350 spent fuel to the Baikal waste site at Semipalatinsk (ibid: 16). In 2004, the U.S. repatriated 11 kg of fresh HEU fuel assemblies from Tashkent to Russia (ibid: 16). In April 2006, 63 kg of spent HEU fuel from Uzbekistan were transported to the Mayak facility in Russia (ibid). Uzbekistan as in 2007 had less than 56kg of HEU (irradiated fuel) and has also agreed to convert its only operating reactor to low-enriched uranium (ibid).
Energy

Endowed with rich natural resources, especially oil and gas, the CARs became the centre of competition among various external players after 1991, each jockeying for influence in the region’s energy sector. Three of the five CARs (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are rich in oil and gas reserves.

The table below shows the oil and gas reserves of the three CARs, Russia and Middle East.

Table- 1.1
Proven Oil and Gas Reserves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Proven Oil Reserves at end of 2008 (thousand million barrels)</th>
<th>% Share of total world production</th>
<th>Proven Gas Reserves at end of 2008 (in trillion cubic metres)</th>
<th>% Share of total world production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Less than 0.05%</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Less than 0.05%</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>43.30</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>754.1</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>75.91</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the above table suggests, oil of the CARs constitutes 3.3 percent of the world’s total oil reserve and 6.2 percent of the total gas reserve of the world. Kazakhstan has the largest oil reserves in the region. Turkmenistan accounts for the largest gas reserves in the region and has the fourth largest reserve in the world (according to high estimate and fifth place according to optimum estimate) (Orazgylyjow 2009). Oil and gas reserves of Middle East constitute 59.9 percent and 41 percent respectively of the total oil and gas reserves of the world. Compared to Middle East, the CARs reserves are less, nevertheless significant. The CARs cannot replace the world’s dependence on Middle East but could be an alternative source of oil and gas, which until 1991 was out of reach for countries not close to the former Soviet Union. For Europe, the independence of the CARs opened an option to engage
with the CARs directly and gain access to the energy resources. Russia buys Central Asian gas and then sells them to the European market, making Europe dependent on Russian whims. For example Russia-Ukraine gas dispute crippled gas supply to Europe as most of the Russian gas reaches European market through Ukraine.

As part of Soviet legacy, all pipelines connecting the region to the world market pass through Russia, giving Russia a monopoly on the region’s oil and gas sector. Efforts are taken to diversify the region’s pipeline routes to reduce CARs dependence on Russia. The West supported Baky-Tibilisi-Ceyhan (BTC), Nabucco are some efforts to connect the Central Asian region with Europe bypassing Russia. BTC became operational in 2005. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI), Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) are initiatives to connect Central Asia with South Asian market. China in the past few years has been very active in the region, especially in enhancing economic cooperation. The Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline operating since 2005 and Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline functioning since 2009 have further strengthened China’s position in the region.

Access to the rich resources of these republics is an important U.S. agenda in the region. Strobe Talbott (1997: 1) said that the U.S. has a “stake” in the success of political and economic reforms in the Caucasus and Central Asian nations. The region, according to Talbott (ibid), is estimated to have “200 billion barrels of oil and that is yet another reason why conflict resolution must be job ‘One’ for US policy in the region. It is both the prerequisite for and an accompaniment to energy development”. The region has great economic potential. Instability in the region could disrupt the supply of oil and gas from the region to the outside market. It would also make supply of oil and gas more costly. Stability in the region is also crucial for the construction of new pipeline routes and diversifying the market. Promotion and consolidation of regional balance, economic and political stability are the primary U.S. interests in the region. Talbott (ibid) has also pointed out the significance of stability in the region in the following words-

“if economic and political reform does not succeed, if internal and cross border conflicts simmer and flare, the region could become a breeding ground of terrorism, a hot bed of religious and political extremism, and a battleground for outright war. It would matter profoundly to the United States if that were to happen in an area that sits on such as 200 billion barrels of oil".
According to Prof. Blank (2007: 3), access to energy resources of the region should not be the primary U.S. interest in the region. However, he states that the U.S. access to the energy resources, which is a stronghold of Russia, is nevertheless important. He says, "sales of Central Asia’s states’ large energy holdings are restricted to Russia due to the dearth of pipelines of oil and gas, they will not be able to exercise effective economic or foreign policy independence. Therefore, energy access on equal terms to American and other Western firms relates very strongly to the larger objective of safeguarding these states’ independence, sovereignty and prospects for secure development" (ibid: 4).

Cornell (2002) in her paper “America in Eurasia: One Year After” argues that the U.S. government and American business community was engaged in the region much before September 11. The U.S. engagement following the independence was primarily economics, with American oil companies making ‘considerable’ investment in the ‘Caspian littoral states’ (ibid: 1). Economic importance of the region is well described in the following words-

“The valuable oil and natural gas reserves of the Caucasus and Central Asia are likely to make the new Silk Road a trade and investment engine to power unprecedented economic growth. The Silk Road would connect China, Russia, Eurasia, and Western Europe, providing business opportunities for American companies and, ultimately, jobs for American workers. The future of the Silk Road is, therefore, an important national interest” (Cohen 1997: 2).

Oil and gas have been repeatedly used as a strategic weapon. The oil crisis of 1973 shook the world economy. Again, Iranian revolution in 1979 and the first Gulf War caused oil crisis in the world. The U.S. like other countries has been looking for alternative supply of oil to reduce its dependence on Middle East. Fouskas (2003: 19) argues,

“The U.S, having won the Cold War, also wants to control, as much as possible, their production and safe transportation (oil and gas) to western markets by eliminating possible West European, Eastern (e.g. Russia, China) or Middle Eastern competitors. Moreover, the emergence of possible alternatives to the Middle Eastern energy resources, such as those discovered in the Caspian Sea region, has opened up new policy avenues for the U.S. With the disintegration of the USSR, Central Asia, together with the Caucasus, the Black Sea and the Balkans, have assumed particular geo-strategic significance, either as oil and gas producing regions or as strategic transport routes. The roots of the new geo-political game since the collapse of the USSR lie precisely here".
The U.S. intervention in Central Asia after September 11 is linked to a “wide network of oil and gas pipeline projects connecting Eurasia’s heartland with the Black Sea and the Balkans” (ibid: 119). Fouskas (ibid) further argued that “major theatres of war since 1990 (Iraq/Persian Gulf, the Western Balkans and Afghanistan/Central Asia) has been the new geo-political environment centred on oil and gas pipeline projects, an environment that has opened up with the collapse of the USSR” (ibid).

The Freedom support Act of 1992 did not directly mention any provision on energy resources of the region. It only speaks of establishing free market and “create business and investment opportunities for Americans”. However, the Silk Road Strategy Acts of 1999 and 2006 mentioned in length the U.S. energy interests in the region. The 1999 Act (Sec 2) says, “the region of the South Caucasus and Central Asia could produce oil and gas in sufficient quantities to reduce the dependence of the United States on energy from the volatile Persian Gulf region”. The 2006 Act (Section 101) says, ‘it is the policy of the United States to assist the countries of Central Asia and Caucasus for energy and energy transit’. Section 201 of the 2006 Act further reflecting the relationship between the U.S. and the region pointed out that “the pressing need for diversification of energy resources makes access to Central Asia and Caspian Sea oil and gas resources a high energy security priority of the United States”. Section 202 of the 2006 Act further emphasised the need for “preventing any other country from establishing a monopoly on energy resources or energy transport infrastructure in the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus that may restrict United States access to energy resources is important to the energy security of the United States and other consumers of energy in the developed and developing world” (Silk Road Strategy Act 2006). The importance of energy in the U.S. strategy towards the region is reflected by the appointment of Special Envoy for energy to the region Morningstar in 2009.

**External Players and the U.S. Strategy**

The exit of the Soviet Union created power vacuum in the region. Countries rushed to fill in the gap that led to competition among various players, which is often termed as the “new great game” in the region. Russia, U.S., China, Turkey, Iran etc are some of the major players engaged in the region. The U.S. policy towards the CARs is also depended on its power equation with other external players involved in the region.
Both geographic location and natural resources make the region attractive to external players, each trying to carve out its sphere of influence. Even back in ancient Silk Route days, the region connected Europe with Asia and has been an economic hub. In modern time, too the region continues to be a strategic asset. Brzezinski (1997b: 50-51), describes Central Asia’s importance in the following words-

“Eurasia is the world’s axial super continent. A power that dominates Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world’s three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia. A glance at the map also suggests that a country dominant in Eurasia would almost automatically control the Middle East and Africa. With Eurasia now serving as the decisive geo-political chessboard, it no longer suffices to fashion one policy for Europe and another for Asia. What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America’s global primacy and historical legacy”.

After independence, the CARs also want to reduce their dependence on Russia. Past historical baggage affects CARs relation with Russia. Years of Soviet rule, however, gives Russia few advantages compared to other external players. A sizable Russian population are still present in these republics, prevalence of Russian language, presence of Russian border troops and defence cooperation with Russia are some advantages Russia enjoys in the region. In addition, Russia has access to the region’s oil and gas resources because of the existing Soviet era pipelines. Russia is also one of the top trading partners of the CARs. A large number of labourers from CARs migrate to Russia in search of jobs. These factors strengthen Russia’s position in the region vis-a-vis other players. At the same time, it is worth noting that the CARs are willing to reduce their dependence on Russia when it suits their interests. Olcott in her 2009 Congressional Testimony stated that the Russian military and economic position in the region has been shaken. In the past few years, Russian relation with CARs have been affected by few incidents like Russia-Turkmenistan gas dispute, renewal of the U.S. base at Manas but it would be a mistake to think that Russia would give up its stronghold in the region lying at its backyard. Russia loosing its hold over the region, which was once its dominant sphere of influence would tarnish its international image and Russia will take every step to prevent such a development from taking place.

After 1991, Russian influence in the region waned. It was partly because of a section of policy makers in Russia wanted Russia to emerge as a European power and
partly due to poor Russian economic condition. Russian economy was shattered, which crippled its ability to assume international responsibilities. With Putin coming to power in 1999, Russia’s policy towards Central Asia underwent a significant shift. Russia made it clear that it is not going to give up its position in Central Asia, which it has enjoyed for decades. Russia began to reassert itself, though from time to time there were hiccups in its relations with the individual CARs.

The U.S, nevertheless, wanted to keep Russia away from re-establishing its influence in the region. According to Charles William Maynes (2003: 121), immediately after independence “America’s main objective in the region seemed to be to help the Central Asian states gain sufficient confidence and stability to prevent any resurgence of Russian influence”.

China today is another major player in the region. China’s strength lies in its economic engagement with these republics. Moreover, three of the five CARs (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) share border with China. China has resolved its border disputes with the CARs amicably, which were legacy of the Sino-Soviet border problems.

Two factors primarily shape China’s interest in the region. China’s booming economy makes it imperative for China to look for secure and reliable sources of energy resources. The quest for energy resources is one of the primary interests driving China to the energy rich CARs. Another factor is China’s growing concern about separatist movement (Uighur movement) in Xinjiang Autonomous region in north-western part of China. It fears that Uighur separatism cause would garner support from the Turkic people of Central Asia like Kazakhstan, which has a sizable Uighur population. Stability in the region is thereby in China’s interest.

China’s growing influence in the region is a challenge for the U.S. interest in the region. Central Asian oil and gas has already started flowing to China within a span of few years. Most of the West supported pipelines carrying oil and gas from the region are still in its nascent stage except BTC, China has already completed an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan and a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan. China is one of the important trading partners of the CARs whereas the U.S. does not figure in the top five. Russia and China have further strengthened their position in the region through
the SCO, which is a regional grouping consisting of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The group has consistently opposed U.S. entry in the group and thereby maintaining their stronghold in the region.

Cultural and linguistic affinity with the CARs made Turkey an important player in the region. Unlike Russia and China, the U.S. encouraged Turkey's presence in the region. Turkey, a NATO ally is an important partner of the US. The US promoted ‘Turkish Secular Model’ for the CARs. Turkey has been considered for transit route for most west supported pipelines. The U.S. encouraged Turkey to counter Iran’s influence in the region. The U.S. tried to restrict the spread of Iranian influence in the region as evident in writing of Cohen (1997: 5), an expert on the region -

“Tehran appears interested in turning Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other countries in the region into a market for both its goods and its ideology. Iranian domination would be likely to prevent the successful flow of oil to the West as well as the involvement of American companies in the economic development of the new Silk Road. An Iranian presence, like a Russian presence, would hinder the development of democracy and free markets throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia”.

However, Turkey’s lack of financial capability, its own domestic problems and its quest to enter E.U. have deterred Turkey from playing a major role in the region. The geo-political rivalry among the various players is a characteristic feature of the region. As Ahmed Rashid (2002: 146) has pointed out-

“Today’s Great Game is between expanding and contracting empires. As a weakened and bankrupt Russia attempts to keep a grip on what it still views as its frontiers in Central Asia and controls the flow of Caspian oil through pipelines that traverse Russia, the USA is thrusting itself into the region on the back of proposed pipelines that would bypass Russia. Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are building their own communication links with the region and want to be the preferred route of choice for future pipelines heading east, west or south. China wants to secure stability for its restive Xinjiang region populated by the same Muslim ethnic groups that inhabit Central Asia, secure the necessary energy to fuel its rapid economic growth and expand its political influence in a critical border region. The Central Asian states have their own rivalries, preferences and strategic imperatives. Looming above this is the fierce competition between American, European and Asian oil companies”.

Blank (2007: 2) argues that the US interests in Central Asia is “primarily strategic” because the region is close to Russia, China and Iran. Prof Blank (2007: 2) argued that the U.S. policy towards the region under both Clinton and Bush
Presidency was to “uphold the integrity, independence, sovereignty, and security of these countries against Russian and Chinese efforts to dominate them and circumscribe their freedom”. He further argues, “American policy of defending the independence, integrity and security of these states extends the long-established vital geo-strategic interest of the United States in forestalling the rise of any Eurasian empire in either continent that could challenge it”.

“The United States and the west in general find themselves increasingly dependent on the continued stability and development of the Central Eurasian region. The United States is heavily invested in Afghanistan, and its engagement here and in Central Asian states is a long-term endeavor. The future of this region has a considerable bearing on the development of the Global War on Terrorism and in general on U.S. security interests in Eurasia; the maintenance of a access to airspace ad territory in the heart of Asia; the development of alternative sources of energy; and the functioning of freedom and democratic development” (ibid).

**RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

A general overview of the U.S. policy in the region was outlined to better understand the changing dynamics of Uzbekistan-U.S. relationship. The U.S. interests in Uzbekistan also revolve around the U.S. broader policy towards the region. Also, the major issues discussed above have shaped the U.S. relations with Uzbekistan.

Why did the study take Uzbekistan as a case study? Among the five CARs, Uzbekistan is the most populous country with about 27 million populations (CIA World Fact Book 2009) and it shares a unique position in terms of its strategic location. Uzbekistan is the only CARs that shares its borders with all other CARs. The geo-strategic location of Uzbekistan is of utmost significance for the politics of the region. It has Kazakhstan in the north, Afghanistan in the south, Turkmenistan in the west, Kyrgyzstan in east and Tajikistan in east and southeast.

As part of Soviet boundary delimitation process, a large number of Uzbeks are settled in neighbouring Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. A sizeable number of Uzbeks are also present in Afghanistan. Ethnic consideration is an important component of intra-regional relation. Uzbekistan is ahead of other Republics (barring Kazakhstan) in terms of socio-economic development. As compared to other Republics, it has a commendable defence force, which is a Soviet legacy. In terms of natural gas reserves Uzbekistan ranks seventeenth (ICG 2007: 16). Uzbekistan is one of the largest
producers of gold among the former Soviet Republics. Uzbekistan became an important ally of the U.S. in the region after it allowed the U.S. to use its base at Karshi-Khanabad, much to the envy of other CARs.

Pointing at the importance of Uzbekistan, Henry L Clarke, the US Ambassador to Uzbekistan (1992-1995) said- “Uzbekistan is the central piece of the puzzle of Central Asian stability, in terms of physical geography, population and economic potential. If we claim to have a policy for Central Asia, then it must include Uzbekistan” (Clarke1999: 374). Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour in 2004 remarked- (Blank 2007: 24)

“Central Asia has a major strategic importance for the United States and Uzbekistan inevitably plays a key role in our policy toward the region. It occupies, as we know, a core position in Central Asia. It has by far, the largest population, and it is the guardian of a centuries long tradition of enlightened Islamic scholarship and culture. And it boasts the largest and most effective military among the five countries”.

For the purpose of the study, the United States-Uzbekistan relationship has been divided into three phases- 1991-2000, 2001-2005 and post 2005. In the initial years of independence, the US policy in Uzbekistan centred on introducing market economy and democratic reforms like in other CARs. The U.S. aid to Uzbekistan was based on certain conditions especially improving human rights record, political and economic reforms, which were often disregarded after 2001.

After independence, Uzbekistan’s foreign policy immediately showed a tilt towards the US. Uzbekistan’s stand on two issues reflected its closeness with the U.S.- Uzbekistan’s policy towards the Middle East and the expansion of NATO membership (Akbarzadeh 2005: 57). Uzbekistan abstained or remained absent from UN votes on the question of Palestine. Although a Muslim country, Uzbekistan established diplomatic ties with Israel in February 1992, making it the first CARs to establish formal relations with Israel (ibid). Yitzak Rabin, the then Israeli Prime Minister visited Tashkent in 1994 and President Karimov visited Israel in 1998 (ibid: 58). Iran-U.S. dispute is another determining factor in the US-Uzbekistan relations. Iran's support to religious fundamentalist forces in Tajikistan and Shia minority in Uzbekistan is seen as a threat to the political stability of Uzbekistan (ibid). President Islam Karimov endorsed the trade embargo imposed by the U.S. on Iran in 1995, resulting in strained Iran-Uzbekistan relations (ibid: 58-59). On 4 May 1995 Karimov
was reported to have said that “I am on the side of the United States, which declared a trade embargo on Iran” (SWB 1995). Later on, the Uzbek Ambassador to Iran denied that Karimov had supported the embargo and that the President’s remarks were distorted with the aim of marring the good relations between Iran and Uzbekistan” (ibid). Uzbekistan also supported the US led ‘Iran-Libya Oil Sanctions Act of 1996’ in the UN General Assembly (ibid: 59). Later on Uzbekistan also supported the US war on Iraq in 2003. President Karimov justified Uzbekistan’s position on the Iraq war as a fight against common enemy, Islamic militancy and terrorism (ibid: 59-60).

NATO’s eastward expansion gave Uzbekistan opportunity to develop its ties with the US. President Karimov said that NATO’s presence in Central Asia is “far from being a threat to CIS security as projected by the Russian top brass, NATO’s expansion represented the spread of international peace” (ibid: 60). Uzbekistan’s discomfort with Russia’s was further highlighted by Uzbekistan supporting NATO’s bombings in Yugoslavia (ibid: 61).

Uzbekistan’s closeness was strengthened with the beginning of the US led ‘war on terror’ in Afghanistan. The Karshi-Khanabad airbase was used as a base by the U.S. led coalition forces. Uzbekistan became a key partner of the U.S. in its war efforts in Afghanistan. Both the sides signed the ‘Declaration on Strategic Partnership’ in 2002, which marked a beginning of a new chapter in the Uzbekistan-U.S. partnership.

After Uzbekistan became a key partner of the U.S. in the ‘war against terror’, issues like democratic reforms and human rights took a backseat. However, the Uzbekistan-US relations deteriorated after the Andijan incident and the closure of the U.S. base at Karshi-Khanabad. The U.S. criticised Karimov government’s handling of the Andijan crisis and demanded an independent enquiry of the incident, which the Uzbek government refused. Uzbekistan on the other hand suspected that the Andijan incident was a handiwork of the U.S. Uzbekistan even rejoined the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) in 2006, which it had left in 1999.

Uzbekistan will continue to be an important player in the region. Even after the thaw in the bilateral relation after the Andijan crisis, recent developments indicate
the U.S. interest in re-engaging with Uzbekistan. Richard Boucher’s speech in April 2006 reflects the sentiment:

"U.S. assistance programs in Uzbekistan focus on working directly with the people of Uzbekistan on human rights, micro-credit lending and agribusiness development, health and education reform, water use management and community development. The Government of Uzbekistan has hampered the delivery of assistance by implementing banking regulations that slow or prevent the transfer of funds to non-governmental organizations. Many international and local non-governmental organizations have lost their accreditation to work in Uzbekistan, and many others have been harassed. Nevertheless, we should continue to engage the government of Uzbekistan where it is in our own interest to do so. Security, non-proliferation, narcotics smuggling, and law enforcement programs, when possible in the current political environment, advance key U.S. interests by addressing improved treatment of suspects and detainees, trafficking in person and weapons, and the proliferation of nuclear and biological materials and expertise"."
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study will have the following objectives:

• to identify the key factors of the United States' policy in Central Asia in general with particular emphasis on Uzbekistan.
• to examine the geopolitical significance of Uzbekistan
• to identify the complex issues like democratic reforms, human rights, political Islam that have been affecting Uzbekistan-US bilateral relations.
• to analyse the impact of United States-Uzbekistan relations on the geopolitics of the region.
• to study the impact of bilateral relations on the development of democracy in Uzbekistan.
• to study the role of the partnership in combating regional extremism and terrorism in the region.
• to analyse initiatives taken by regional organisations to counter balance the influence and presence of the United States in the region under the aegis of its friendship with Uzbekistan.

HYPOTHESES

• Uzbekistan received support/assistance from the United States soon after its independence, which did help in reducing Uzbekistan’s dependence on Russia.
• The present leadership of Uzbekistan has been uncomfortable with the new US stress on promotion of market economy, democratic reforms and improvement of human rights record in Uzbekistan.
• Uzbekistan has moved closer to Russia and China due to the US open criticism of human rights situation there, particularly during and after the Andijan crisis.
DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

The present research is descriptive and analytical based on a wide range of primary and secondary sources. Speeches of the Heads of the Governments, officials of Uzbekistan and the United States, other published documents, reports of UN agencies, Summary of World Broadcasts, etc. is consulted. The Internet resources are referred for relevant data in addition to other materials. The U.S. Government's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (until February 2006) and Bureau of South and Central Asia websites are used as primary data especially to note the U.S. assistance to Uzbekistan. Other relevant websites of both the governments have been carefully scrutinised. Relevant books, journals and news reports on this topic have also been thoroughly referred.

A field trip to Uzbekistan was done for twenty-five days in November 2008. The field visit was done to conduct interviews and for collecting primary and secondary materials. As part of the field trip, I got an opportunity to interact with the faculty and students of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED), a premier Institute in Uzbekistan dealing with foreign policy. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the lively discussion with the under-graduate and postgraduate students of UWED, which gave me the young generations' perceptions of the trends in Uzbek foreign policy. Other foreign policy experts and academicians in Uzbekistan were also consulted during the visit. Meeting with the officials at the U.S. embassy at Tashkent was conducted for the study. A first hand survey of the socio-economic and political situation of Uzbekistan benefited the study. It helped to have a sound understanding of the contours of the bilateral relations and of the geopolitics of the region. As requested by the respondents the names and positions of the concerned persons are not disclosed in the thesis.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Geo-strategic Significance of Central Asia and the US policy in the region

Many scholars have elaborately dealt with the geo-strategic significance of Central Asia and the US policy in the region. Brezezinski, Zbigniew (1997) in The Grand Chessboard (New York: Basic Books) provides a considered view of the geo-strategic significance of Eurasia. He describes Eurasia as a chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played and this struggle requires strategic management of geopolitical interests. The book highlights the early twentieth century theory expounded by Sir Halford Mackinder who pioneered the concept of Eurasian “pivot area” (which covered Siberia and much of Central Asia) and later on Central-East European “heartland” as the means to attain global supremacy. The book reveals the US view of economic and political significance of the Asian part of Eurasia. It sheds light on the emergence of non-Eurasian power in the region for the first time. The author, against the backdrop of geo-strategic significance of Eurasia outlines American policy in the region, which is centred on not allowing any Eurasian country to gain foothold in the region and thus challenge American presence in the region. He suggests that there should be no one power but "many medium, relatively stable and moderately strong one … but necessarily inferior to the United States in their individual or even collective capabilities" in the region. The book portrays a more pro-active US role in the region keeping in view the great-power rivalry in the region. Though the book published in 1997 stresses the US policy in the region prior to 9/11, it provides a US view of the geo-strategic significance of the region. The book gives a western viewpoint of the new ‘great game’ in the region and also tries to portray American policy in the region. Maynes, Charles William (2003) in the article “America Discovers Central Asia”, (Foreign Affairs, (82(2), March/April) outlines the US interests in the region. It highlights the policy shift of the US according to the changing equation of international politics. The US objective in the initial years was to assist the Central Asian states to attain stability to resist Russia's influence in the region. But post September 11 brought the region much closer to the US. The article reveals the role the US can play to further its own interests as well as those of the Central Asian states. The article also gives an account of the social, political, economic and
security conditions of the region and its impact on the US-Central Asia relations. He suggests a comprehensive and wider regional approach by the US and reconciliation of Islam and democracy for the stability of the region. Warikoo, K.(1995) in “Emerging Scenario” in K. Warikoo (ed.) Central Asia: Emerging New Order, (New Delhi: Har Anand Publications) analyses the geo-strategic importance of the region and highlights the interest in the region of not only the regional actors but also of the US, Western Europe etc. The article provides a perspective on the overall situation of the region since its independence. Cornell, Svante E. (2002) in the article “America in Eurasia: One Year After”, (Current History, October) writes about the importance of the US presence in Caucasus and Central Asia since the beginning of ‘war on terror’. The author points out that barring Afghanistan, post-Soviet Central Asia has been significantly influenced by the post 9/11 changes in the international politics and it has significantly affected its relations with the US. The article highlights three options for the US policy in the region and its implications for the US—firstly, to withdraw from the region after the end of the war in Afghanistan. This would negatively affect American interests and homeland security. Secondly, to establish a long term and large-scale military and political presence. But this would intensify the rivalries between external powers in the region, which will have a destabilizing effect. Finally, a middle path is what the author suggests, i.e. a flexible military presence along with participation in the socio-economic and political development of the region. Mattoo, Amitabh (2003) in "United States of America and Central Asia: Beginning of the Great Game" in Nirmala Joshi (ed.) Central Asia: The Great Game Replayed: An Indian Perspective, (New Delhi: New Century Publications), Blank, Stephen (2001) in “The United States and Central Asia” in Roy Allision and Lena Jonson (eds.) Central Asian Security: The New International Context, (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press) and Yereskeshavan, Laura (2004) in “USA-Caspian-Central Asian Region: New Realities” in K. Warikoo and Mahavir Singh (eds.) Central Asia since Independence, (Kolkata. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad) give a detailed review of the US interests in the region. The Freedom Support Act of 1992 (The White House. Office of the Press Secretary: Washington D.C. Accessed Online Web:http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars.offdocs/b920401.htm) gives the basis of US policy
in the region. It forms the foundation of US policy and its assistance to the newly independent countries.

Many scholars have written on the strategic importance of Uzbekistan. Starr, S. Fredrick (1996) in "Making Eurasia Stable", (Foreign Affairs, 75(1), January/February) extensively writes about the significance of Uzbekistan compared to other Central Asian Republics extensively. He suggests that Uzbekistan have the capability to act as a Central Asian stabilizer and serve the interests of regional security, Europe and NATO. The article outlines Uzbekistan’s assets as compared to other Central Asian Republics- its geographic location, population, historical significance, cultural progress, economic resources etc. It also points out some of the challenges faced by Uzbekistan i.e. dependence on cotton monoculture, ecological disaster, authoritarian rule, factionalism etc. He reveals that with the growth of CIS as an informal body for economic coordination, a strong and sovereign Uzbekistan would be beneficial for all the countries involved in the region. The article over emphasises the role of Uzbekistan as a conduit for regional stability. It ignores the intra-regional conflict and the role of external powers.

Clark, Henry L. (1999) in "An American view of Uzbekistan", (Central Asian Survey, 18(3)) outlines the basic importance of the bilateral relations prior to 9/11. Clarke who was US Ambassador to Uzbekistan describes the significance of Uzbekistan as the key to Central Asian stability. He pointed out that the US couldn’t guarantee stability but could contribute significantly by ensuring and assisting economic and political reforms. He categorically mentions that the US-Uzbekistan proximity is not detrimental to the Russian interest in Uzbekistan. The article also appreciated Uzbekistan’s role as a secular state and its economic progress. But the article gives a very one-sided and a western perception of Uzbekistan. It ignores some of the crucial threats faced by Uzbekistan.

Kirimlie, Meryem (1997)) in "Uzbekistan in the New World order", (Central Asian Survey, 16(1)) gives an account of the situation of Uzbekistan after independence. It deals with Uzbek ethnicity, Islamism, economic relation with Russia, China, Afghanistan and other Central Asian Republics. This article gives a foundation to understand the internal situation of Uzbekistan, which also affects U.S policy towards it.
Diplomatic Exchanges

The diplomatic exchanges between the two countries have been elaborately dealt with in the Summary of World Broadcasts (1991-2000). It gives all the specific visits between the two sides, which is of great significance to the understanding of the shift in diplomatic manoeuvres with the changing time. Pannier, Bruce in “Uzbekistan: US Official Offers Cooperation, Criticism” (www.rferl.org) deals with the August 2006 visit by the US Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Boucher to Uzbekistan. The article points out that after the closure of the US bases, Uzbekistan started distancing itself from not only the US but also the West in general. Boucher remarked that during his visit in August 2006 both sides talked about “actions that are needed to try to rebuild trust to try to achieve cooperation”. The official website of the Embassy of the United States in Uzbekistan (http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/official_visits.html) gives a detailed account of all the visits that have taken place. Daly, et.al (2006) in “Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations, 2001-2005” (Silk Road Paper, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program) gives a detailed account of the bilateral relation and the chronology of events taking place in the Republic.

Economic Co operations

these countries inclusion in the WTO. The authors suggest that these countries have to join the WTO to reap the benefits of liberalization. The article gives a good account of the structural changes brought in Uzbekistan to adjust to the norms of market economy that has a significant impact on the US investment policy in the region. The B.P. Statistical Review of World Energy (2009) gives a detailed account of the gas and oil reserves of the region and the MBendi Information Services gives the figure of gold reserves and mining in the Republic. The Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia of the U.S. Department of State (www.state.gov/eur/ace ) gives the year wise details of the U.S. assistance to Uzbekistan and to the other CARs. The U.S. Census Bureau (http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/product/enduse/exports/c4644.html) gives the trade figures of the U.S. with the CARs and the commodities exchanged.

Security Cooperations

There are writers who have extensively discussed the security factor in the area of Uzbek-US relations. Bhatti, Robin and Rachel Bronson (2000) in “NATO's Mixed Signals in the Caucasus and Central Asia”, (Survival, 42(3), Autumn) critically analyses the NATO’s presence in the region and its strategic implications. The article points out two mechanism of the US involvement in the region - (a) Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Flank Zone Agreement (b) Partnership for Peace. It focuses on difference among NATO members regarding NATO's policy in Central Asia and Caucasus region. The authors advocate the need for clear NATO policy for the region. Cohen, Ariel (2003) in “US Security Policy in Central Asia After the 9/11 Attack”, in Birgit N. Schlyter (ed.) Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute) deals with various dimensions of US-Central Asia security relations. He points out the major change in US strategic interest in Central Asia after September 11. In pre 9/11 days, the author reveals that a number of US military deployments were undertaken under the aegis of NATO's, Partnership for Peace Programme and others through bilateral US-Uzbekistan military contacts. The article highlights a number of high level visits between US-Uzbekistan, which had an important bearing on the security aspect. It outlines the major US security policy towards the region, which includes its policy with other countries like
Russia, China, Iran, and measures against Hizb-ul-Jahrir and Islamic threat. The author also points out non-military security aspect of US policy in the region like geo­economics. Kasenov, Qumirserik (1998) in the article “Central Asia: national, regional and global aspects of security” in Roy Allison and Christoph Bluth (eds.), Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia, (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs) reveals the security situation of Central Asia. He outlines the key element of the concept of national security of the Karimov government. He writes about the military integration action in Central Asia, creation of Euro-Central Asian security space and NATO expansion in Central Asia.

**Constraints in Bilateral Relations**

Several writers have discussed the major issues affecting the bilateral relations between the United States and Uzbekistan. Some writers have dealt with one aspect of the issue affecting the partnership and others have considered all major factors. Herrick, Christopher and Patricia B McRae (2003) in their book Issues in American Foreign Policy (New York, San Francisco, Boston, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore, Madrid, Mexico City, Munich, Paris, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Montreal: Longman) gives a theoretical base for the understanding of some of the challenges in US-Uzbekistan relations. They give an account of the key foreign policy issues affecting the US in the 21st century. The authors examine the manner in which policy decisions in one-area affects the US foreign policy formulations in other areas. They give a vivid analysis of the basic understanding of the emergence and evolution of issues in American foreign policy. It provides a thorough understanding of the US policy on international terrorism, drug trafficking, international energy policy, and democracy. The book does not deal with the US policy in Central Asia but deals with comprehensive general understanding of US foreign policy, which helps to understand the factors guiding the US policy making. Akbarzadeh, Shahram (2005) in Uzbekistan and the US: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda, (London, New York: Zed Books) writes specifically on the issues guiding the relations between the two countries. The prevalence of authoritarian rule, denial of human rights is a hindrance to Uzbekistan’s foreign relations with the west. Prior to 9/11 its economic assistance from the west was restricted due to its poor human rights record.
But Uzbekistan’s support to the US-led coalition forces made human rights issues secondary and security consideration became paramount. The book gives a very good analytical description of several key aspects like Soviet and post-Soviet authoritarian power structure, spread of political Islam, human rights and democracy. It also gives an account of important foreign policy decisions by Uzbekistan and the ups and downs of US-Uzbekistan partnership. The author provides an important source of understanding of the basic issues affecting the bilateral relation and also the geopolitical stability of the region. Schatz, Edward (2002) in the article “Islamism and Anti Americanism in Central Asia”, (Current History, 101 (657), October) reveals the spread of political Islam in Central Asia and with it the gradual growth of anti-American sentiments. He gives an account of the Islamic fundamentalist groups prevalent in the region. He is of the view that the Islamic threat in Uzbekistan is more complicated compared to other Central Asian republics. Karimov government in name of combating Islamic fundamentalism has come down heavily on the people. The US government’s lack of concern towards the authority’s repressive measures is alienating the population from the US. Diwedi, Ramakant (2005) in “Challenges of Religious Extremism in Uzbekistan”, (Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, 9(1-2), January/June) gives a good understanding of the situation of religious fundamentalism in Uzbekistan. The article mentions the history of the development of religious extremism in Uzbekistan and gives information about the major radical groups. It also points out the international and regional initiatives to tackle the situation. Islamisation of politics in Uzbekistan on the line of IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir has grave security implications for the region as well as for external powers. The US presence in the country can trigger the rivalries among great powers. Luong, Pauline Jones (2003) in "The Middle Easternization of Central Asia", (Current History, October) portrays the emerging threat of terrorism in Uzbekistan as well as Central Asia. The author views that brutal repression of those challenging the authority would lead to spread of greater militancy. The article points out that the US military presence has indirectly sanctioned the increasing violation of human rights by Central Asian politicians at the helm of affairs. The author opines that the US is building a new Middle East in the region, which implies a very volatile region detrimental to peace and stability.
Fiernan, Mohapatra, Cherian and Kazi give an account of the process of democratization in Uzbekistan. Fiernan, William (1997), in "Political Development in Uzbekistan: Democratization?", in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.) Conflict Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) reveals the condition of democracy in the country. He points out that Uzbekistan has made no significant development in the growth of democracy. The country is still dominated by an authoritarian political culture. The article also gives an account of Karimov's role in the country's politics prior to independence. It details out the political development of the country since 1991, including the party system and elections. The study of political reform is significant for the present research because prior to 9/11 democratic reforms was one of the criteria of western assistance to Uzbekistan. Mohapatra, Nalin Kumar (2005), in "Dynamics of Democratization and Political Process in Uzbekistan"(Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, 9(1-2), January-June) gives an account of the institutional mechanism and democratization process in Uzbekistan, informal political process, and the challenges in the process of democratization. He also highlights the features of the three parliamentary elections of 1994, 2000 and 2004 in Uzbekistan. The author points out that the obstacles faced by Uzbekistan are very similar to the challenges that most newly independent Asian and African countries had to bear with after their independence at the end of Second World War. It also resembles democratization process of many Latin American and SouthEast and East Asian countries. Cherian, John (2005) in "Uzbekistan's Experiment with Democracy"(Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, 9(1-2), January/June) gives an account of the 2004 parliamentary election in Uzbekistan. The author reveals the differences among the International Observer Groups regarding the nature of the election. The CIS countries consider the election to be free and fair but the OSCE is critical of the conduct of the election. The article also describes the challenges faced by the government and its impact on Uzbekistan's foreign policy. Kazi, Aftab (2005) in "Political Transition and Parliamentary election, 2004 in Uzbekistan", (Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, 9(1-2), January-June) also gives an in-depth account of the 2004 parliamentary election in Uzbekistan.
There are several articles highlighting the constraints in US-Uzbekistan relations. The article by Saidazimova, Gulnuza, “Central Asia: what does Closure of U.S. Military Base in Uzbekistan Mean?” (www.rferl.org) gives an overview of the US-Uzbek relations after the Andijan crisis and the closure of the US bases in Uzbekistan. The author points out the comments made by Craig Murray, a former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, which highlights the loopholes in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy making with the U.S. Murray said- “President Karimov’s decision to confront the US is basically his struggle to survive. In this struggle, the first thing he decided to do is to get rid of US military pressure”. The article also points out the views of some Russian thinkers who also consider Karimov’s decision as a means to his own survival. Kimmage, Daniel, in “Uzbekistan: Karimov Battens Down the Hatches” (www.rferl.org) also deals with the US-Uzbek relations after the closure of the bases and the Andijan crisis. The article points out that the primary factor of Uzbekistan’s decision to close the US bases in Uzbekistan was the belief that the US has moved from “a useful strategic partner to a meddlesome plotter that threatens his hold on power”. The article highlights the deterioration of US-Uzbek relations and Uzbekistan’s closer ties with Russia and China.

**Uzbekistan and the Great Power Play**

Several writers have pointed out the great power rivalry and the regional politics involved. Olcott, Martha Brill (2005) The Geopolitics of Central Asia prior to September 11” in the book Central Asia’s Second Chance (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) reveals the interests of various countries like Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, Middle East in the region. The myriad choices in front of the Central Asian countries gave rise to tussle among Central Asian Republics to receive the best from outside powers. The other article by Olcott, (2005), “Changing Geopolitics less has changed than One Might Think” in the book Central Asia’s Second Chance (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) highlights the changed relationship after 9/11. The author points out that the US presence in the region has nominally increased i.e other than energy sector, the US engagement is transient in the region. The author reveals that Russia and China for their own security interest would step up their presence in the region but their success in the region depends on their own domestic
considerations. Bohr, Annette 1998) in Uzbekistan; Politics and Foreign Policy, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs) highlights Uzbekistan’s engagement with other Central Asian Republics. The author mentions Uzbekistan’s role in Tajikistan conflict, its relation with Russia and non-CIS countries. The book examines the dimensions of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy, which is turn affects its relations with external powers and has regional significance. The book does not give a very in-depth analysis of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy. Macfarlane, S. Neil (2003) in “The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia”, (International Affairs, 80(3), May) writes about the various aspects like American interest in Central Asia, evolution of the US policy in Central Asia and its implications on Central Asian regionalism. The author is of the view that regionalism is not a main issue of the US policy and the US has not encouraged regional institutions in the region. The article also deals with the role played by Russia, China, CIS, CSTO and SCO in the region and their implications on the politics of the region.

The literature survey portrays the various dimensions of US-Uzbekistan partnership. Many more books, articles, commentaries, analysis, International Documents and government sources have been referred in addition to the above mentioned list.